



EU



Clear English Tips



for Translators



**Edited and published by
Nicolae Sfetcu**

EU Clear English Tips for Translators

This ebook represents an independent adaptation of the European Commission work [Clear English Tips for Translators](#), freely available via the EU Bookshop as PDF. © European Union

Edited and published as e-book by [Nicolae Sfetcu](#) and [MultiMedia](#)

Samples from the guide, at [English - Romanian Translation](#)

Here are some tips to help translators avoid copying structure and wording from other languages that would be awkward in English. They should be useful to non-native speakers, but may serve as handy reminders for native speakers too.

English prefers to be simple, concise and concrete.

Use simple words where appropriate.

- *Change* > **to**
- **initiate** a programme > **start** a programme
- apply for **employment** > apply for **a job**
- **activities of a criminal nature** > **crime**
- **contribute to constructing** Europe > **help build** Europe
- **require assistance** > **need help**
- **request remuneration** > **ask for a fee**
- **specialised methodologies** > **special methods**
- an **agricultural holding with caprine animals** > a **goat farm**
- **with a possibility of dissemination** to producers > **and may be sent** to producers
- **in view / light of the fact that** fees are high > **because / as** fees are high
- **pursuant to / in accordance with / within the framework of** this Law > **under / according to** this Law
- **for the purpose of** protecting consumers > **to** protect consumers
- **for the purpose of its use** as a guide > **to be used / for use** as a guide
- important **from the point of view of** producers > important **for** producers
- the Directive **concerning / regarding / relating to** financial services > the Directive **on** financial services / the Financial Services Directive
- **despite the fact that** resources are limited > **although** resources are limited
- **prior to / subsequent to** the Council Decision > **before / after** the Council Decision
- **at the time when** the application is submitted > **when** the application is submitted
- **until such time as** a decision is taken > **until** a decision is taken
- **on the occasion of its accession to** the EU > **when it joined** the EU / **on joining** the EU / **upon accession to** the EU
- Action is needed **at the present time.** > Action is needed **now.**
- Help is needed **in the near future.** > Help is needed **soon.**

- updated **on a daily basis** > updated **daily**
- the study **demonstrates / indicates** that > the study **shows** that
- the Commission is **aware of the fact** that > the Commission **knows** that
- **in the event of** an emergency > **in** an emergency
- **in the same context**, it is necessary > it is **also** necessary
- **equal or superior to** EUR 10 000 > EUR 10 000 **or more**
- She **suffered an armed attack**. > She **was shot**.
- **It is inadvisable to be in control of a moving vehicle when suffering from fatigue**. > **Do not drive if you are tired**.

This means avoiding archaic legalese.

- *Change > to*
- The matter was put to the Style Guide Committee (**hereinafter ‘the Committee’**). The Committee > The matter was put to the Style Guide Committee. The Committee ...
- Contract between the County of Needham (**hereinafter referred to as ‘the County’**) and Acme Imports (**hereinafter referred to as ‘Acme’**). > Contract between the County of Needham (‘the County’) and Acme Imports (‘Acme’)
- **the aforementioned** professions. > **these / the above** professions

Leave out unnecessary words

- *Change > to*
- Article 1 **of the present Regulation / hereof** > Article 1 (of **this** Regulation)
- **the matter / question / subject of** state aid > state aid
- under **the provisions / terms of** the Directive > under the Directive
- the Commission’s **services** > the Commission
- **the Hungarian authorities** > Hungary
- the decision by **the management of** Acme > the decision by Acme / Acme’s decision
- **the training process** > training
- **a period of** five years > five years
- **the / an amount of** EUR 10 000 > EUR 10 000
- increase funding **levels** > increase funding
- **under the conditions encountered** in practice > in practice
- **actually** implemented the reform package > implemented the reform package
- including, **but not limited to, the following:** > including:
- a **person designated as responsible** team leader > a designated team leader
- The Board **decided to** suspend her mandate. > The Board suspended her mandate.
- High prices harm consumers’ **interests**. > High prices harm consumers.
- For the operation of any lifting equipment it is **absolutely** required for the **operator** to be **equipped** with the **corresponding** licence. > A licence is required for the operation of any lifting equipment.

This includes unnecessary initial phrases.

- *Change > to*
- **It must be noted that** high prices harm consumers. > High prices harm consumers.
- **The Commission notes that** the deal was unlawful. > The deal was unlawful.
- **In this respect, I should like to recall** the consistent rulings of the Court, according to which ... > The Court has consistently ruled that ...

Prefer a verb to an abstract noun

- *Change > to*
- **carry out an evaluation of** performance > **evaluate** performance
- **conduct an investigation into** fraud > **investigate** fraud
- **perform an audit of** operations > **audit** operations
- **give consideration to** consumers' concerns > **consider** consumers' concerns
- **secure the involvement / participation of** students > **involve** students
- **upon the expiration of** the time period > **when** the time period **expires**
- **within 30 days following notification to** farmers > **within 30 days after** farmers are notified
- **make a/the recommendation that** > **recommend** that
- **contains a discussion of** results > **discusses** results
- **effect payment of** EUR 10 000 > **pay** EUR 10 000
- **bring about an improvement in** quality > **improve** quality
- **come to an agreement to the effect that** > **agree** that
- Law 485/2010 **on the amendment of** Law 22/2006 > Law 485/2010 **amending** Law 22/2006
- after **the setting up of** the Institute > after the Institute **was set up**
- **introduce a ban on** smoking > **ban** smoking
- **cause harm to** consumers > **harm** consumers
- **bring about an increase in** funding > **increase** funding
- **proceed to the counting of** the votes > **count** the votes
- **provide a response to** the complaint > **respond** to the complaint
- **The funding of** projects **takes place** centrally. > Projects **are funded** centrally.
- **Changes to** the Law did not **come about.** > The Law was not **changed.**
- The project will be **subject to an evaluation.** > The project will be **evaluated.**
- **The practice of** crop **rotation** is regular. > Crops are regularly **rotated.**

This includes lists.

- The project will achieve the following results: > The project will:
 - **creation of** contacts ... > **create** contacts ...
 - **preparation of** recommendations ... > **prepare** recommendations ...
- Officers are responsible for tasks including: > Officers:
 - **supervision of** work ... > **supervise** work ...
 - **monitoring of** progress ... > **monitor** progress ...

Particularly avoid chains of abstract nouns.

- This will **create the possibility of modifications of the methods of implementation** of the project. > This will **make it possible to change how the project is implemented**.
- **The aim of the programme is the improvement of the effectiveness of the work of customs authorities for the purpose of the protection of EU interests.** > The programme **aims to help** customs authorities **protect** EU interests.

Prefer a gerund to an abstract noun

- *Change* > *to*
- **the preservation of** public health > **preserving** public health
- by **the introduction of** a speed limit > by **introducing a** speed limit
- the cost of **the provision of** a service > the cost of **providing** a service
- **through the acquisition of** new skills > **by acquiring** new skills

Note that the gerund makes a noun phrase from an entire clause, not just a verb.

- **the taking of** a decision > **taking** a decision
- **the building of** an area of justice > **building** an area of justice

Thus, a simple gerund can often replace a pair of abstract nouns.

- **the submission of an application** for a job > **applying** for a job
- **the development of a design** for a project > **designing** a project

Prefer participles to relative clauses

- *Change* > *to*
- a project **which is** funded by the EU > a project funded by the EU / an EU-funded project
- a plan **which has been** approved by the Committee > a plan approved by the Committee
- the team **which is** planning the project > the team planning the project
- a staff member **who is** working part-time > a staff member working part-time

And eliminate participles entirely if appropriate.

- a report **prepared / drawn up / written / submitted / issued / published** by our firm > a report by our firm
- a decision **taken / issued** by the Board > a decision by the Board / a Board decision
- a plan **made / proposed / formulated** by the EU > a plan by the EU / an EU plan
- a study **conducted** by the UN > a study by the UN / a UN study
- a letter **sent / addressed** to Member States > a letter to Member States
- a factory **located** in Warsaw > a factory in Warsaw

- staff **working** at / **employed by** the Commission > staff at the Commission / Commission staff
- an article **published** / **appearing** in a journal > an article in a journal
- a company **producing** / **manufacturing** clothing > a clothing company
- a table **containing** / **showing** / **listing** results > a table of results
- a report **discussing** / **presenting** progress **made** > a report on progress / a progress report
- a programme **aimed at** / **serving** / **helping** children > a programme for children
- methods **used in** planning aid > ways of planning aid / how aid is planned
- reasons **underlying** crime > reasons for crime / why crime is committed

Use the passive voice sparingly

- *Change > to*
- An extension may **be requested** by any party. > Any party may **request** an extension.
- This project **was rejected at** Commission level. > The Commission **rejected** the project.
- **A meeting was held** in Paris **between** A and B. > A and B **met** in Paris.

Inanimate subjects with animate verbs are fine.

- **In** Article 20 **it is stated** ... > Article 20 **states** ...
- Institutional reform **is advocated in** the report. > The report **advocates** institutional reform.

The passive is appropriate in these sentences:

- > The team's findings **are detailed on** page 8.
- > These provisions may **be amended by** a decision of the Minister for Finance.

Consider replacing negatives with positives

- *Change > to*
- It is **not uncommon** for requests to be rejected. > It is **common** for requests to be rejected.
- It is **not excluded** / **not impossible** that we will fail. > It is **(entirely) possible** that we will fail. / We **may (well)** fail.
- The penalty shall be **not less than** EUR 10 000. > The penalty shall be **at least** EUR 10 000.
- **Failure to observe** the rules is subject to a penalty. > **Breach of** the rules is subject to a penalty.
- The realisation of road work by workers who are **not certified is prohibited**. > Road work **may** be performed **only** by **certified** road workers.
- The Commission **never acts without consulting** stakeholders. > The Commission **always consults** stakeholders **before acting**.

Consider short forms and pronouns to avoid repeating full names ...

- *Change > to*
- **The Startup Financing Scheme** grants loans to new businesses. In this way, **the Startup Financing Scheme** stimulates competition. > **The Scheme** grants loans to new businesses. In this way, **it** stimulates competition.
- **The Special Investigations Department of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare** has investigated the allegations. > **We** have investigated the allegations.

... and instead of foreign or ad hoc abbreviations.

- the National Institute for Quality and Organisational Development of Health Care and Medicines (**GYEMSZI**) ... **GYEMSZI** ... > the National Institute for Quality and Organisational Development of Health Care and Medicines ... **the Institute / it** ...
- the Financial Control Methodology and Internal Audit Department (**FCMIAD**) of the Ministry of Finance (**MF**) of the Slovak Republic (**SR**) ... the **FCMIAD MF SR** ... > the Financial Control Methodology and Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic ... the **Department / it** ...

Express conditions, including hidden ones, with ‘if’ ...

- *Change > to*
- **in the event / case of** a successful application > **if** your application is accepted
- **when / where** a beneficiary fails to comply > **if** a beneficiary fails to comply
- **provided that** the application is received in time > **if** the application is received in time
- **in the event of** a sale or transfer of the holding > **if** the holding is sold or transferred
- **should** you need more information > **if** you need more information
- A manufacturer **who** does not have a place of business in a Member State shall designate an authorised representative. > A manufacturer shall designate an authorised representative **if** it does not have a place of business in a Member State.
- A proposal **which** does not comply with applicable legislation may be excluded. > A proposal may be excluded **if** it does not comply with applicable legislation.

... entitlement with ‘may’...

- Each owner **shall be entitled to** grant a licence to a third party to exploit the jointly owned results. > Each owner **may** grant a licence to a third party to exploit the jointly owned results.
- A beneficiary **is allowed to** use a simplified method for calculating eligible costs. > A beneficiary **may** use a simplified method for calculating eligible costs.

- The negotiating body **shall have the right to** meet without the central management. > The negotiating body **may** meet without the central management.

... and exceptions with ‘unless’ or ‘however’ (or ‘subject to’).

- **except where** expressly authorised in this Annex > **unless** expressly authorised in this Annex
- **without prejudice to** Article 2 (1) > **subject to / unless otherwise provided for in / without prejudice to** Article 2
- **Without prejudice to the aforementioned provisions**, a licence is not required for ... > **(However,)** A licence is not required for ...

(1) ‘Without prejudice to ...’ does exist in legal English, including EU law, but is used less than in other languages. Consider alternatives if uncertain.

In general, cut out extra verbiage.

- *Change > to*
- dockworkers **who have obtained the relevant authorisation to practise the profession of dockworker** > **authorised** dockworkers
- ensure **the suitability of the equipment used for the performance of work and its safety for use** > ensure **that** equipment **is suitable and safe**
- The cartel’s **purpose was to maintain prices at their prevailing, elevated level.** > The cartel **aimed to keep prices high.**
- **Further to the letter by which the Commission asked our authorities to provide clarification of this matter, we would like to provide the following opinion.** > **Please find enclosed our response to your request for more information on this matter.**
- **It is not necessary that** the Commission **provide evidence of implementation of the agreement between** the participants to fix prices, **but only that it prove the existence of such an agreement.** > The Commission **must show** that the participants **agreed** to fix prices, **not that they actually did so.**
- **Part of the responsibility of the responsible team leader is also the confirmation that the totality of the workers who compose** the team are wearing a **work uniform which ensures their safety at work.** > The team leader **must ensure** that **each** worker **on** the team is wearing a safety uniform.
- The notice **seeks to increase understanding of** the Commission’s investigation process **and thereby enhance the efficiency of investigations and ensure a high degree of transparency and predictability in the process.** > The notice **explains** the Commission’s investigation process **to ensure that it is efficient, transparent and predictable.**
- **The compositions of the teams for the performance of every type of construction work may not deviate from those provided for in the legislation on the branch of construction workers.** > Construction teams **must be composed** as provided for in **relevant** legislation.

- ‘Cargo work’ means loading **any good or item for transport or movement from the point of storage** onto **any** means of transport or **unloading from the means of transport to the point of storage**. > ‘Cargo work’ means moving **cargo** from **a place where it is stored** onto **a** means of transport or **vice versa**.

English prefers straightforward syntax

Keep the subject close to the beginning of the sentence

- *Change > to*
- Under the agreement and subject to the call for proposals, **the Commission** shall fund the project. > **The Commission** shall fund the project under the agreement and subject to the call for proposals.
- If a party does not respond in time or if no agreement is reached within the maximum time period, **the Contracting Party** will consider the procedure to have failed. > **The Contracting Party** will consider the procedure to have failed if a party does not respond in time or if no agreement is reached within the maximum time period.
- As the provision which gave rise to the Commission’s objections ceased to apply before the deadline for response, **the Commission’s objections** are obsolete. > The provision which gave rise to the Commission’s objections ceased to apply before the deadline for response. **Those objections** are therefore obsolete.

Avoid splitting up subjects, modals, verbs and direct objects

- *Change > to*
- The team **reported** to the Board **its findings**. > The team **reported its findings** to the Board.
- An applicant **may**, within 14 days, **contest** in writing **the Committee’s decision**. > An applicant **may contest the Committee’s decision** in writing within 14 days.
- The Commission **shall**, if the proposal is approved, **fund** the project. > If the proposal is approved, the Commission **shall fund** the project.
- The judicial council **may**, by means of an order setting out the grounds for its decision, **extend** the investigation period. > The judicial council **may extend** the investigation period by means of an order setting out the grounds for its decision.
- **The guidelines**, from which the Commission may not depart without giving reasons, **lay down** the criteria for setting the amount of a fine. > **The guidelines lay down** the criteria for setting the amount of a fine. The Commission must give reasons if it departs from the guidelines.

If a sentence is too long, pull information out into separate sentences.

- *Change > to*
- Under the current system, if a manufacturer does not comply with the Regulation, the Ministry may, **taking account of the principle of proportionality**, withdraw

the manufacturer's licence **unless it takes measures to ensure its compliance within a reasonable time**. > Under the current system, the Ministry may withdraw the licence of a manufacturer if it does not comply with the Regulation. **The Ministry must act proportionally. It need not act if the manufacturer takes measures to ensure its compliance within a reasonable time.**

But don't change sentence boundaries in legislation.

As a work-around, split with references and semicolons.

- All documents must be sent, once evidence has been taken, to the prosecutor, **who**, within a period of one month, shall submit them to the court, **which**, within a period of one month, shall either reject the case or issue a court order, **even for** related offences, regardless of how serious they are, **when it** considers that there is no indication of one of the crimes in Article 1. > Once evidence has been taken, all documents must be sent to **the prosecutor**; the prosecutor has one month to submit the documents to **the court**; the court then has one month either to reject the case or to issue a court order; **this also applies** to related offences, regardless of how serious they are; **this provision does not apply if the court** considers that the case involves one of the crimes in Article 1.

Use topic-introducing phrases sparingly.

- *Change > to*
- **Concerning / When it comes to** state aid, the speaker outlined his proposals. > The speaker outlined his proposals **on** state aid.
- **As far as** these goals **are concerned**, the report states that progress is being made. > The report states that progress is being made **towards achieving** these goals.
- **When it comes to** fighting disease, lives may depend on **it**. > Lives may depend on fighting disease.

English may use different number, articles, gender or words from other languages

Keep uncountable nouns in the singular.

- *Change > to*
- **informations** on EU policy > **information** on EU policy
- **trainings** for staff > **training** for staff
- **aids** to farmers > **aid** to farmers
- **actions** (1) to help students > **action** to help students
- the **impacts** (1) on health > the **impact** on health
- professional **competences** (1) > professional **competence**
- EU agricultural **policies** (2) > EU agricultural **policy**
- best agricultural **practices** (2) > best agricultural **practice**

- training **materials** (2) > training **material(s)**
- **crimes** (2(against EU interests > **crime(s)** against EU interests

(1) Words like 'actions', 'impacts' and 'competences' do appear in EU English, under influence from other languages.

(2) Some nouns, like 'policy', 'practice', 'material' and 'crime', can be countable or uncountable. Though the line is not always clear, they are countable referring to an individual concept and uncountable referring to a collective one.

Use ‘a’ rather than ‘the’ for members of a class.

- *Change > to*
- **The** worker on **the** site should wear **the** uniform. > **A** worker on **a** site should wear **a** uniform.
- **The** application for **the** child to attend **the** school activity must be signed by **the** parent. > **An** application for **a** child to attend **a** school activity must be signed by **a** parent.

If appropriate, use the singular for members of a class to avoid confusion.

- **Workers** will receive **computers**. > **Each worker** will receive **a computer**.
- **Plumbers** with professional **licences** may: > **A plumber** with **a** professional **licence** may:

Use ‘the’ rather than ‘this’ to refer back to a document.

- *Change > to*
- Regulation 23/2000 ... **this** Regulation ... > Regulation 23/2000 ... **the** Regulation ...

(Use ‘this’ for the present document.) >

Do not use gender pronouns for entities.

- *Change > to*
- The contractor has announced **his** decision. > The contractor has announced **its** decision.
- Any inaccuracies found in a producer’s file will disqualify **him or her**. > Any inaccuracies in a producer’s file will disqualify **the / that producer**.

Consider alternatives to ‘of’.

- *Change > to*
- the largest lake **of** Italy > the largest lake **in** Italy / Italy's largest lake
- support **of** young people > support **for** young people

- officers **of** the crime division > officers **in** the crime division
- a decision **of** the Court > a decision **by** the Court / a Court decision
- participants **of** projects > participants **in** projects / project participants
- staff **of** the company > staff **at** the company / company staff

Finally, avoid ‘false friends’ in translation.

- *Change > to*
- **adequate** mechanisms > **suitable** / **appropriate** mechanisms
- an **attestation** of registration > a **letter certifying** / **certificate** of registration
- **in the case of** Greece > **for** Greece
- ordinary **citizens** > ordinary **people** / **consumers** / **users**
- projects **coherent** with sectoral priorities > projects **consistent** with sectoral priorities
- The Commission **communicated** its decision **to** the national authorities. > The Commission **notified** the national authorities **of** its decision.
- respect for national **competences** > respect for national **powers** / **jurisdiction**
- This Regulation **completes** Regulation ... > This Regulation **supplements** Regulation ...
- **consequent** policy > **consistent** policy
- **Consumption** is stable. > **Consumer spending** is stable.
- to **control** imports > to **check** / **verify** / **inspect** / **monitor** imports
- to carry out a **control** > to carry out a(n) **audit** / **check** / **inspection**
- **Criminality** is on the rise. > **Crime** is on the rise.
- to **deepen** relations > to **expand** / **improve** relations
- The **dossier** is closed. > The **issue** / **matter** is closed.
- Many **economic operators** have been hurt. > Many **businesses** / **traders** have been hurt.
- to **elaborate** / **formulate** / **establish** a plan > to **draft** / **draw up** / **develop** / **produce** a plan
- to **have a positive effect** on production > to **help** / **boost** production
- to **have a negative effect** on consumers > to **hurt** / **harm** / **be detrimental** to consumers
- all **elements** of the process > all **aspects** / **items** / **stages** of the process
- to **exercise** a profession > to **practise** a profession
- to **exercise the profession of** lawyer > to **work as** a lawyer
- to **exploit** a farm > to **run** / **operate** a farm
- to **foresee** a ban > to **provide for** / **impose** a ban
- to **foresee** action > to **envisage** / **plan** / **contemplate** action
- **in the framework of** the plan > **as part of** / **under** the plan
- **heterogeneous** conditions > **uneven** / **disparate** conditions
- **illegal** state aid > **unlawful** state aid
- an **important** amount > a **large** / **significant** amount
- **informatics** experts > **IT** / **ICT** / **computer** experts
- an **information note** > a **memo** / **letter**
- to **intervene** at a meeting > to **speak** / **take the floor** at a meeting

- EU **intervention** > EU **activity** / **projects** / **action** / **involvement**
- to **introduce a demand** for aid > to **apply** for aid
- to provide **justification** > to provide **evidence** / **an explanation**
- agricultural **material** > agricultural **supplies** / **equipment**
- **modalities** for payment > **arrangements** for payment
- a **negative evolution** in trade > a **downturn** / **decrease** / **drop** in trade
- the economic **perspective** > the economic **prospects** / **outlook**
- to **realise** a project > to **implement, carry out, complete** a project
- to invite **reflection** > to invite **discussion** / **debate** / **thought**
- to **reinforce** transparency > to **enhance** / **improve** / **increase** / **heighten** transparency
- to **represent an actor for** change > to **help bring about** change
- to **respect** / **adhere to** conditions > to **comply with** / **fulfil** / **meet** conditions
- **sickness** insurance > **health** insurance
- to **transmit** a report > to **send** a report

Sources

- Cansdale, G., [Tips for Slovak translators translating from Slovak into English](#)
- European Commission, [How to Write Clearly](#)
- Agerbeek, F., [The Essential Guide to Drafting Commission Documents on EU Competition Law](#)
- Gardner, J., [A Brief List of Misused English Terminology in EU Publications](#)
- Russell, Gayl and Mills, Louise, Clear Legal Writing [unpublished presentation]

About the editor

Nicolae Sfetcu

web design, e-commerce and other web applications * internet marketing, SEO, online advertising, branding * software localization, English - Romanian - French translation * articles, desktop publishing, secretarial services * powerpoint, word and pdf presentation, image, audio and video editing * e-book conversion, editing and publishing, isbn

E-mail: nicolae@sfetcu.com

MultiMedia SRL <http://www.multimedia.com.ro/>

Web services: <http://www.teleactivities.com/>

Book editing: <http://www.setthings.com/>

Translation <http://www.translation2ro.com/>

Personal: <http://www.sfetcu.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nicolae.sfetcu>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/nicolae>

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/nicolaesfetcu>
Google Plus: <https://www.google.com/+NicolaeSfetcu>